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The Silken Cord

AND OTHER STORIES

ALLEN BROOKS

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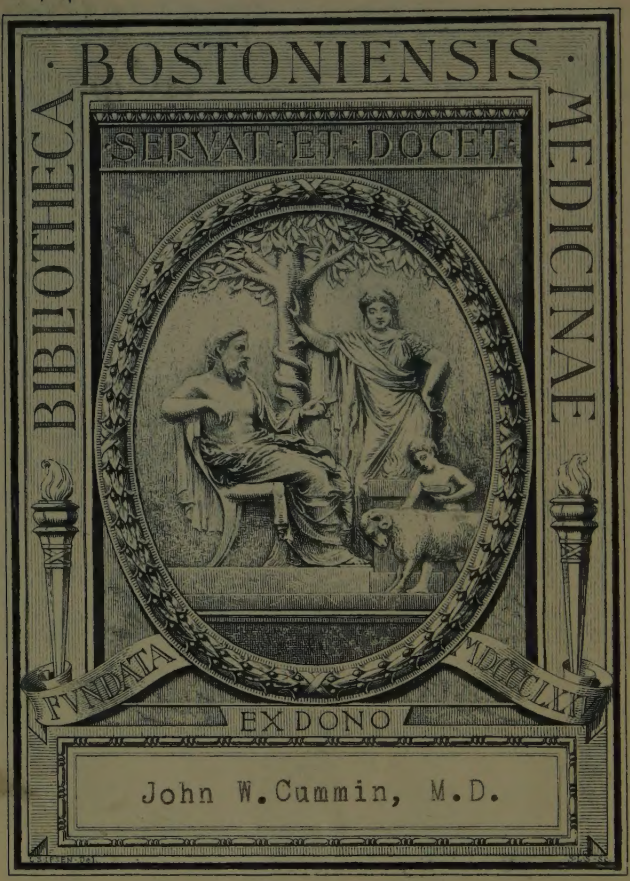
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THE SILKEN CORD

and

OTHER STORIES

BY

ALLEN BROOKS

(Dr. William Allen Brooks)

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Dr. J. W. Cummins

THE SILKEN CORD

THE streets of Canton were thronged, and from every window a gay dragon, butterfly or banner bespoke the fact that something unusual was going on. Men, women and children in holiday attire glided silently along, exchanging looks, but very few words. The children acted as if awe-inspired and reflected in their actions the cautions which had been given them.

In front of the home of Chang Sing, a young man of nineteen or twenty stood, looking, waiting. His face was serious; his whole attitude showed deep thoughts and an utter disregard of the gay decorations all about him. To be sure, he was eager to see his young Emperor, in whose honor the holiday was being held, but his mind was filled with misgivings, and he had learned secretly that the Empress was planning no good for the young Emperor.

There was a whispered rumor; it had come to him in the night and he was puzzled. Time and time again he had heard his father tell of the cruelty and heartlessness of the Empress, and now he learned that many feared what she might yet compass against the rightful ruler.

The ties of blood to her meant nothing, and this had especially disturbed Chang's mother, who had often told him of her fears for the life of the young Emperor, saying, "I fear, I know not what." And

then drawing him close, would almost whisper to him, "Be brave. Keep strong. Love your Emperor and find some way to protect him."

So thus it was that on this holiday Chang stood thoughtfully filled with vague and anxious thoughts. He felt that in some way he had taken upon himself great responsibilities. The weight of them sobered him and he felt years older. And way down in his heart there was a great fear, a fear that something was going to happen, he knew not what. And with it all came a great sense of duty, a duty to his Emperor.

This thought urged him to action, yet he knew not what to do. Then he saw something which gave him an idea—an idea which settled his whole future life.

He heard the plaintive little cry of a small bird, and looking up, he saw a huge hawk chasing it. Try as best it could, the little bird could not get far enough away. Slowly but surely the hawk circled around it, each circle drawing nearer and nearer. And Chang, as he watched, felt sure that the little bird was doomed. Then there were other shrill cries and a whole flock of small birds appeared suddenly, as if they had come down from the very blue sky itself.

The encircled bird cried and cried again. The hawk slowed down for a second and appeared to be watching the rapidly approaching flock. Suddenly she made a rapid sweep toward her prey. The little bird barely escaped, by a quick turn. Then the hawk found that she was too late, for the flock now

attacked her from all sides, and each bird in the flock seemed to be striking straight for her eyes. She could find no chance to strike, for no sooner did one swoop by than another was flying at her, always straight for her eyes.

If she circled, they were all about her. If she swooped, they followed, and when she turned upward, there they were waiting for her.

Seeing that it was hopeless, she forgot her original prey in looking after her own safety, and with one rapid flight straight up through the center of her persecutors, she soared high in the air and left them. And then the whole flock of little birds flew down onto the roof of a house, and lighting, commenced to straighten out their feathers and chirp to one another.

And Chang as he watched them found food for thought. "What the birds can do with the hawk, the young men of China can do with the Empress," he half said aloud. And thus it was that the great secret society of China found its inspiration and inception.

"Why not?" said Chang to himself. "We will form a great secret society. A little bird will be our emblem. We will have our members all over the world. We will have them in the Emperor's household to protect him. We will have them all about the Empress. We will work silently, quietly, secretly, always for our Emperor. And if anything should happen to him, through her, we will fly about her until we deprive her of sight, hearing, or even life itself."

With these new-born thoughts, Chang no longer stood still. He sprang into action. The coming procession was entirely forgotten. There was work to be done.

After a hasty look up the street, he turned into the house and, finding his mother, he unfolded to her some of his plans.

"Mother," he said, "I am going away. It is better that you should not know where or why. I can only tell you that I have a great work to accomplish—something which means a whole lot to our Emperor and to our country. Please make ready for me a few necessary things, as my journey will be long and I know not when I shall again look into your eyes and ask for your blessing. It may be that I shall never see you again, and if not then we shall meet in the happy life beyond, and I can then render you an account.

"From time to time I shall send you a picture of a bird. If the wings are spread, you will know that I am active and on the move. If its wings are folded, you will know that I am resting and watching. And if I send you a picture of a whole flock of flying birds, you will know that important events are taking place. And not until you receive a picture of a lot of birds settled on a roof will you know that my work is finished."

"So be it, my son. I will ask no questions, but may you soon send me the picture of the housetop. For surely I shall miss you, and no matter where you are or what you are doing, you may be sure that your mother's love and anxious thoughts are

with you." And she touched his forehead with her lips, while he held her in his arms for just an instant.

Then quietly Chang left the house and slowly wended his way along a narrow alley, with its pavement of small granite blocks. Once in a while he would look up at some signboard covered with Chinese letters in gold, or flatten himself against the wall to allow a sedan chair to pass.

The "Nightmare City of Canton" was getting ready for the evening meal, and from many a blue-gray brick house the odors of cooking filled the narrow alley and reminded Chang that he had had no food since morning. Just then Chang noticed two coolies behind him, and he waited for them to pass. No sooner had he stopped, however, than they became strangely interested in the proprietor of one of the little shops, who was sitting with his dish of Indian ink and paint brush beside him and was adding up on his abacus the results of the day's business.

Chang gave them a look and hastened on. After a while he looked back again, and again he found the two coolies following. "Strange," he said, "why do they follow me? It cannot be that my thoughts are already known. But I must escape them."

And as he walked on, that same dread and fear of something, something he could not see, came over him, and in the coming darkness he wondered what it was that had taken such a hold of him. "Why should I be followed? Can it be possible that anyone knows?"

He little knew that his father's house had been watched for months, that all the time his mother and father had been talking to him a young girl who was employed about the house was always listening and watching, and had reported to her people all that had been said and done. She had heard the last conversation between Chang and his mother, and had run in all haste to her father to tell him that there was a plot against the Empress. And he it was who had sent the coolies to trace Chang and learn, if possible, his object and who were his associates.

But Chang had learned wisdom in a very short space of time, and once filled with enthusiasm over his project, he instinctively had learned caution.

By this time it was quite dark, and as he was passing a double-leaved doorway he recognized it as a shop kept by the father of a young woman who had always been his ideal. Yet he had never dared to speak to her or even hope that she had seen him. He noticed that the doors were not fully closed. He made up his mind quickly and, slipping in between them, he drew them together. He was not a second too soon, for just as they came together he heard the steps of the two coolies and heard their exclamations as they found that he was no longer in sight.

"Why did you fall on that slippery stepping block and thus delay us?" he heard one say to the other.

"Do you think I wanted to fall?" was the reply. "Surely my arm is painful enough, and if I did not know that our master will be angry with us, I had

much rather go home and rest a while."

Then the voices faded away, and Chang turned to find the young woman Rami, sitting watching him.

"Your indulgence, but I have been followed, and I took advantage of your half-open doors to evade my pursuers. Kindly pardon me, won't you?" he said to her.

"I truly will," said Rami, "but I must talk quickly to you, as there is no knowing how soon mother may hear us, and then I know not what will happen to me. I knew that you were coming."

"Knew that I was coming?" said Chang. "Why, I did not know that myself."

"Yet it was so," said Rami. "This afternoon I was sleeping, and as I slept I distinctly saw you push the doors of the shop open, glide inside and close them and stand listening. And so, after supper, I crept out here and opened them just so very little and I was sitting waiting for you.

"I fear I am very bold, yet I know not what there is within me which makes me so. There is some mysterious power at work, and now that you are here, I have a strange feeling of being at rest. And I feel sure that you are going to tell me something, something in which I can help you. Quick! tell me. I hear my mother walking in a restless way and she will soon come looking for me."

"Yes, I, too, feel that much must be said quickly," said Chang, "and kneeling to you I bow to the token which is hanging over your head—that picture of a bird with outspread wings."

"I know not what you mean by that token," said Rami. "That picture was one I drew one day after looking at you in vain. I wished I was a bird that I might fly far away from here and forget you."

"Rami," said Chang, "I think I understand, and surely if it has been given to us both that the bird shall be our token, then surely we were intended to work together in this world for a common cause. Put your heart at rest. If your mother should come, I will tell her everything, and I shall ask her to allow me the honor of some day being able to ask for you for my very own. I have seen and worshipped you for years, and many are the offerings I have burned, that good fortune might some day enable me to speak to you. But just now, and perhaps for some few years to come, I must carry on a great work and you are going to help me. I know it, I feel it."

"Chang," said Rami, "I am fearful that you will not find me all that you desire, yet I promise you this: my life, love and devotion are yours. Now, tell me quickly."

"It is this," said Chang, "I am going to found in China and in every part of the world where our people can be found, a secret society. Its emblem will be a bird. Its object, to protect our Emperor. Its finish, revenge upon anyone who harms him. And you must help. I have it all clearly in my mind now. Now I know why we have been so strangely drawn to each other. It is you who are going to be my helpmate. It is you and I who are going to start and build up this safeguard of the Emperor.

"I will give to you your work. You must find some way to get employed in the household of the Empress. You I can trust. Though we have never spoken to each other before, I know and feel it is true. Now I must go.

"If your mother should question you and our voices, say to her that Chang will ask in due course for your hand and do it as formality requires. May I?" and leaning forward, he waited for her lips to touch his.

With a curious little tremor, Rami arose, and with her lips she touched his, and then, with a half sob, half sigh, she turned away. "You make me feel so strangely," she said. "Please go."

"Yes, light of my heart, I will go. But we will work for each other and may the spirits bring us together when our work is finished. Remember, our token is a bird. When once you are in the household of the Empress, send a few brief notes from time to time to my mother, and in one corner draw a bird with wings folded if everything is quiet. Wings spread, if there is something going on. And a whole lot of birds if there is danger.

"Your eyes shine at me like some strange beacon. They bid me go, yet they make me want to stay."

"Read them as you like, Chang, but go. How wonderful it is that so much happiness can come so quickly, last such a little while, and leave one so terribly lonely and hungry." . . . There was the sound of approaching footsteps. After a gentle pressure of Rami's hand, Chang glided swiftly to the doors, opened them just enough to allow him

to pass, then drew them together and stood listening.

He heard Rami's mother say, "What are you doing, child? Why have you not locked the doors? What makes you look so strangely? Come, tell me, what has been going on here?"

"Mother," said Rami, "my dream has come true. Chang has just left a message that when the proper time comes he wishes, in the proper manner, to ask you that I may become his wife.

"He is engaged in a great work. A work which means much danger to himself and all of those who work with him. And he has asked me to share his dangers with him—help him.

"Please listen, mother, and do not look so alarmed. He is going to form a great secret society to protect our Emperor and punish our Empress if she treats our Emperor badly. And he wants me to go to work in the household of the Empress in order that I may warn him of any danger to our Emperor. You will help me, mother, won't you? And when our work is finished, Chang and I will get married, and he will work for you all his life and protect your grave after you have left us, and keep food and gifts on it."

"I will talk it over with your father, Rami," said her mother. "Just you lock the doors, go to bed, and I will let you know in the morning."

THE BEGINNING

With gentle footsteps Chang slid away from Rami's door and quickly made his way until he came to where Lee, a young man of about his own age,

lived. Lee and he had always been close friends, and Chang felt that he could trust him.

Gently he ran his fingers over the bamboo blinds in front of one of the windows. First he ran them slowly and then quickly, and he did this three times. After a few moments, without having made a sound, Lee stood beside him. Chang grasped his hand, and together they entered the house and made their way to a door in the rear of the first room they entered.

Lee opened the door and, taking a small lamp from a shelf, he lit it, and they entered a small room which was perfectly dark, until the gleam of the small lamp threw its rays about.

Lee closed the door behind them and, putting the lamp down, turned to Chang and asked why he had come.

"It is a long time, Chang, since you touched the bamboo of my window. Why have you come to-night? Did you see our Emperor today. To me he looked very sad. I wish that there was something I could do for him. What is the matter with China? Why are we so helpless to have what we want?"

"Strange," said Chang, "that is just what I have come to you about."

And then he sat up close to Lee, and in whispers he unfolded his plans and told him how the idea had come to him and all about what had happened to him since.

When he mentioned the two coolies Lee's face grew very grave and he looked about the room as if fearing that even now they were being watched.

"And what am I to do, Chang? Of course I am

with you. My life is my Emperor's," and saying this, Lee rose to his feet and, taking brush and ink, he quickly drew on one of the panels of the door a small bird with wings outstretched. "So may that show all where my heart is," said Lee. "To you, my hand."

Then Chang told Lee that tomorrow they must speak to some of their friends and in the evening meet at the old robber's house, kept by the one-eyed Sam.

They knew they could trust Sam, for many a time they had seen his face grow dark at the mention of the Empress, and his hand slip onto the handle of a knife which he always wore about him. And they had heard a story that once Sam was high up in the councils of the nation and was supposed to have committed suicide by opium at the command of the Empress. And the whispers had it in regard to his history that the Empress, taking a fancy to him when he was yet a very young boy, had taken him into her household, ruined his young life, and then had given him her commands.

How he had escaped was never known. Yet there had been someone who had carried out his unconscious body and brought him back to life.

Sam had appeared one day in Canton and had hired the old robber's house, which no one else had dared to live in. He had paid little attention to anyone until one day Lee and Chang, passing along one of the alleys, had found him lying with a broken leg, after a bad fall on the slippery pavement, and had carried him home and looked out for him until

he was well. Since then they had been great friends, and they were the only ones who knew that regularly, once a month, a fleet-footed messenger would pass the house of Sam, and as he passed would drop through one of the open windows a small package. And once they had seen on it a peculiar mark which they afterward learned was only used by those in the household of the Empress. So they knew that the one who had saved him was still alive and still interested in him. But they never asked him who it was.

Having talked their plans all over, and having settled that those who were to be chosen members must come from as many different occupations as possible, the two young men parted and Chang hurried home.

His anxious mother was waiting for him, and soon Chang was eating a cold supper, and while eating was telling her all about what he had done. Then, his supper finished, he went to bed.

* * *

The house of Sam was in utter darkness. Not a glimmer of light was to be seen. If one had watched it closely, one would have been puzzled as to what was going on. For every four or five minutes for nearly an hour, the figure of a young man could be seen coming from first one direction and then from the other. The figure would stop in front of Sam's house and disappear. Sometimes, if there was anyone about, the figure would pass on and then reappear when all was quiet again.

Inside the house it was stranger yet. Sam was

sitting, his pipe between his lips and a small lamp beside him. The lamp was completely covered on three sides and only threw its shadows away from the windows.

As each young man entered, Sam would put his pipe down, touch his fingers to his lips, and then, moving a box slowly along the floor, he would raise a trap door and, handing the young man the lamp, he would point the way down a ladder, which could be seen in the dim light. Then, as the young man descended, he would lean over and watch to see that he found his way correctly. When satisfied, he would close the trap door, light another small lamp, replace the box, move a button along on his abacus, and again take up his pipe.

When fifteen buttons had been pushed along on the abacus, Sam rose, and after carefully listening at his windows and looking up and down the street, through a slit in one of the blinds, he went to the rear of the room, and slipping a panel to one side, he entered a small passageway and closed the panel after him.

THE MEETING

Deep underground there in a large room were gathered the fifteen young men, and at one end and facing them all, Chang and Lee were seated. Not a word had been spoken. Suddenly Sam appeared in their midst, and making his way among them, took his seat on the right of Chang, in the corner, and putting his lamp on the floor beside him, said to Chang: "All is well."

Then Chang rose and, speaking slowly in deep

and impressive tones, he addressed them.

"If there is anyone here whose courage fails him, he had better be gone at once. For once having taken the oath which I am about to administer, there will be no turning back. The one who leaves us then, we shall some day leave dead for the dogs and vultures, and we shall see to it that his grave is not protected.

"For us, our emblem is a bird. And from now on we devote our lives to following wherever that emblem shall lead us.

"To our friends we will be everything. To our enemies and to traitors, we will do anything. We will be banded together for the protection of our Emperor. If, in the course of events, it becomes necessary to wreak vengeance upon anyone who has plotted against him or our Society, then you all know what must happen to him or her. And when the end has been accomplished and the individual is no longer capable of doing harm, then some one of us must manage to stamp the cold brow with our emblem.

"Soon, throughout this great country of ours, we will be many thousand strong. The ghosts of our ancestors are all about us. China must be free. We must take our stand among the nations of the world. The one being who stands in our way is the Empress. She cares no more for her people than she does for the dirt in the streets. She thinks only of herself and her power. But she is safe in our hands just so long as she treats our Emperor well. Once let her harm him and then let her fear for her

own safety. Before long we shall have a few of the faithful about her. They must be provided with the means to torture and punish her if the occasions arise. Ling, the chemist, has promised to provide us with the materials. For her, opium is too easy. He has already spoken to me of a subtle poison which we can find a way to administer, which will first weaken her courage and make her fearful of spirits all about her. Then there will come before her eyes strange visions and the terrible fear that her grave will be neglected.

"When she is kind to the Emperor, we will cease giving it to her and live in hopes that she may learn wisdom.

"Each one of you must send to Sam each month what you can spare, for there will be need of money at times and we must always be provided. This much you must do for the cause, and some day by our united efforts we shall place China where she belongs, among the leading nations of the earth.

"And now, my brothers, I am ready to administer the oath. Each one of you must bare the left shoulder. For the protection of us all, the mark which I shall place upon you will soon disappear. Otherwise, I would wish that each one of you and myself might be branded in such a way that all through life the brand might be seen.

"But that would not be wise, for the friends of the Empress might hear of it and everyone might be examined, and then—you know what our fate would be."

Amid deep silence Chang produced a small bird.

For an instant he regarded it tenderly, and then with a quick slash of his knife, he severed the head, and pinching the neck with his fingers, he held it so that not a drop of blood escaped. Then rising, he motioned for them all to do the same, and after they were all on their feet, he commanded them to repeat after him the oath which he administered:

"I believe in the happiness of our future life. I have of my own free will come to this meeting place.

"I love my Emperor.

"I shall die happy if I lose my life in his cause.

"I recognize no sin in dealing with his enemies.

"I am willing to lie, cheat, steal and use poison in his behalf.

"I stand with my Emperor against the whole world.

"If I fail to keep my oath or am disloyal to this cause in any way, then I recognize the right of my fellow-members to deal with me as they think best."

As the sound of the voices died away, Chang called up each one, and allowing the blood to escape drop by drop from the neck of the bird, he touched with it every left shoulder. After they had all been before him, he placed the body of the bird in a lacquer box and passed it to Sam, who, lifting a square stone from the floor, placed it in a secret niche beneath. Then one by one all of the members left the secret room by the ladder by which they had entered.

Lee lingered behind, and when they had all disappeared with the exception of Chang, Sam and himself, he came close to them and whispered, "Did

you notice Sang when you touched his shoulder?"

"No," said Chang.

"I did," said Lee. "He gave a queer little shiver and as soon as he thought no one was watching him, I saw him slip his right hand up under his coat and wipe his shoulder. He must be watched, I fear; I trust him not."

"Why, he it was," said Chang, "that came up to me yesterday and of his own free will asked me if there was not some way in which we might protect our Emperor. I talked with him for a while and he seemed to feel so much hatred for the Empress that I talked freely and asked him to join us here."

"It is enough," said Sam. "I will watch Sang, and before two suns have set I shall know, and may the good spirits protect him if I find him wanting. If he is a traitor, he will be the first one to be found with a little bird fastened on his forehead. Now, Chang, you were speaking to me the other day about Rami and wondering how you could get her placed in the household of the Empress. I have been thinking the matter over and I think it can be arranged. Will you kindly arrange a meeting for me with her mother?"

"My thanks to you, Sam," said Chang. "I will do as requested and ask no questions.

"Now, Lee, I think we had better be going. The evening is getting late, and early on the morrow I must be on my way to build up and extend our society. For time passes quickly and there is much to be done. On my way home, Sam, I shall stop at the house of Rami and deliver your message.

May the good Spirits watch over us all and protect us until the good work is done."

"So say I," said Sam, and leading the way, the three men were soon in the room above.

Lee left the house first and Chang followed, but going in the opposite direction. In a short few minutes' walk he was in front of the house of Rami. As he approached it, his heart beat more quickly and he could hardly catch his breath.

"I wonder what this feeling is which comes over me," he said to himself. "It is something akin to fear, for it makes me tremble. And yet why should I, a strong man, tremble at being near that slip of a girl?"

Just then he saw a small white hand come slowly out between the blinds of one of the windows of Rami's house. It took him but a second to grasp it tenderly in both of his.

"May the good Spirits bless you and watch over you," he whispered, as he pressed the hand to his cheek. "While I desire to remain here always, and while I long to look once more into your eyes, and feel the touch of your lips, I must only linger, for I know it can only be you, Rami, as no one else in all the world has made me feel so strangely. I can only linger long enough to ask you to tell your mother to send word to Sam when she can see him. He will arrange for you to be placed in the household of the Empress. And now I must leave you. Would that you could bid me farewell, for I know not how long it will be before I see you again."

The hand was quickly withdrawn, the blinds

opened silently and quickly, the joy-lit face of Rami came close to his, and he felt on his forehead a tender farewell.

The blinds closed.

As though half drunk with wine, Chang glided away down the alley. More than ever he loved his Emperor.

ON THE ROAD TO PEKIN

Two days later, on the road to Pekin, Chang was slowly trudging along. His fellow travelers were footsore and ill-tempered, and rills of perspiration seamed each dust-covered countenance. Each burden, no matter how light, was more than enough, and the whole world looked dreary to the weary travelers.

Chang paid no attention to anyone. On his back his small pack felt like a load of iron, but he seemed to mind it not. His thoughts were on other matters. He was just about to pass a small tea house when his attention was attracted by a crowd gathered about a prostrate form stretched under an old cedar tree which stood near the entrance. Not knowing why, he joined the crowd, and what he saw made his heart jump into his throat. There lay dead upon the ground the traitorous Sang, who had been at the meeting two nights before. His sightless eyes were glazed, and on his waxen forehead a small golden bird told but too surely the cause of his death.

"How strange," said one of the onlookers, "it was not thirty minutes ago that that young man asked me the address of Ling, the chemist. And I told

him that I did not know, but that he might learn at the tea house. He left me, and shortly after I saw him talking with a man with one eye, and now there he is dead."

"But where did the golden bird come from on his forehead? He did not have it there when I talked with him."

Chang did not want to hear more. Shifting his pack a little on his shoulder, he started and left the crowd. "Number one," said Chang to himself. "It is but the beginning; Sam surely did his work well." And as along the dusty road Chang made his way, he had plenty of food for thought. "Surely," he said to himself, "the combination of many brains is stronger than any one, even if that one has eminent power and great resources. I think we have found the solution of many questions. May the enemies of the bird take heed, albeit they know not what is before them." And as he walked his heart grew lighter. The whole world grew brighter and courage came to him.

"We will save our Emperor," he said half aloud to himself. "We will make China great," he said cheerily, and a little farther on he found himself in a small wood, and slinging his pack off his shoulders, he put it down under one of the trees, and finding a brook near by, filled a dipper which he had taken from his pack and, getting out a little chicken which his mother had cooked for him, he proceeded to enjoy his noon meal.

THE SECRET TOLD

In the smoking room of a great steamer the first

day out from Cherbourg for New York, the usual crowd was gathered. The white-coated stewards were busy serving drinks and answering questions as to whether there would probably be any auction pools on the way over, on the average run of the ship; was there a full passenger list, etc., until one wondered at their patience.

Curled up in one corner with a novel on the table before him and a small glass of Pilsner on its rubber coaster, a young American was looking over the crowd and making mental comments as he tried to size up each one. He had crossed the Atlantic a number of times and had become more or less familiar with certain types. At a glance he recognized one of the old-timers, a gambler with whom he had come in contact on his first trip to London, on the old Majestic. He smiled as he watched him, for there was the same studied manner, the quiet sizing up of every one in the room, the half-lit cigar hanging rather limply at one corner of his mouth, until its owner seemed to discern a possible victim, when it was held firmly between the teeth, and a well-kept though rather fat hand, reached for a match and scratched it. For the next few moments clouds of smoke nearly obscured the man's face. He acted for all the world like a squid which fills the water with its liquid sepia in order that under its cover it may shift its position or escape observation for the time being.

Wandering into the room came two Chinamen, well-groomed and quietly dressed. Without paying attention to anyone, they took seats at a table close

by the American. They interested him and half unconsciously he shifted his position a little nearer to them. As he moved, they glanced at him, then looking reassured, they called the steward and gave their orders.

Sometimes they spoke to each other in their native language. At times they spoke in English. One of them mentioned Washington and was bemoaning the fact that he had forgotten to get a copy of the "Paris Herald" before he came on board.

The American heard them, and reaching into his pocket, he took out the paper mentioned and offered it to him, saying, "You are welcome to this copy if you like."

"Thank you," said one of the two, and took it.

This was the beginning of their acquaintance, and before New York was reached they had become fast friends. Every evening during the voyage the three would be found in one corner of the smoking room, and the American was learning a lot about China that he had never heard before. In his conversation with them he had learned that one was attached to the Chinese embassy at Washington, and that the other was the son of a merchant in one of the large cities of the East.

The American noticed that each one wore on his watch chain a charm made of gold in the form of a bird. He never asked them about it, and it was not until the last evening out from New York that he learned that there was a common bond between them, and he drew his own inference as to what the charm signified.

On the evening in question, all three were in their same corner, as usual, when something was said about the Empress of China. It was the American who broached the subject by saying: "I understand that your Empress is a woman of tremendous ambition and great intellect."

"You speak half truly," said the one who was the son of the merchant. "She was, but she is no longer. A long life of over-indulgence and the use of drugs has so altered her that she has grown gross in appearance, cruel in thought, and absolutely merciless toward those whom she thinks may stand in her way."

"And how about your Emperor?" asked the American.

"Our Emperor is China's hope," said the one from the embassy. "If only he lives there are great things ahead for China."

"Is he ill?" asked the American.

"No, not ill," said one, "but his life is constantly in danger. The Empress may at any time take it into her head to destroy him."

"Why do you not do something about it?" said the American.

"Do something?" said the merchant's son. "We have done a lot. Let me tell you that the Chinese have the strongest secret society in the world. Its members are scattered all over the world. We, both of us, are members. Why, it was only a short time ago that we heard that the Empress was planning to do the Emperor harm and from all over the world we sent cables that if she dared to touch one

hair of his head, we would wreak vengeance on her. And that night, in her room, a number of birds were found flying about. She feared them. She had learned that a number of her faithful servants had been found dead, and always upon each brow a little golden bird was found.

"She hates the birds that fly in the night and our members help her to become more fearful and many, many times when she put her feet into her sandals she has felt a sting of something, and a maid has found it was a needle which some careless person had left there. Then that night she has felt still more a great fear, and for days she has prayed to the spirits that they spare her and kill all birds.

"But, my friend, I have told you too much. Only remember this. I have told you this in semi-confidence, but if you ever learn that anything has happened to our Emperor, you may be sure that it won't be long before something will happen to the Empress. Here is my card. If you ever happen to come into my father's store, just ask for me," and rising, the two youths said "Good night" to the American and left him thinking.

On landing he went about his business, and it was not until years later that events recalled to his mind the conversation in the smoking room.

THE BUSY BIRDS

In a small room attached to the suite of the Empress, Rami was seated, busily engaged in repairing some garments which one of the ladies-in-

waiting had given her. Occasionally she glanced out of the window in the direction of a young man who was working in the garden. He in turn would sometimes glance up from his work, but never seemed to direct his gaze at any particular object. Yet there were times when their glances met and as if reassured after one of these glances, the young man would turn to his work and work steadily for awhile.

There was a gentle breeze, and throughout the palace the silken hangings were swaying slightly as the currents of air swept by them.

In her room the Empress had about finished dressing and from the sharp commands she was giving it was easy to see that she was in bad humor. Had she not again heard of the unfortunate death of another of her messengers whom she had sent with commands to the Emperor? He had been found at the foot of a wall, with his neck broken. But deeply imbedded in his heart there had also been found the short blade of a knife, such as the pruners in the orchard used—and on his forehead traced with dirty fingers was the outline figure of a bird.

When fully dressed, the Empress swept into her receiving room and turning to one of her attendants, she commanded that Chu Lung be sent to her. In a few moments he appeared. His shifty eyes swept the room before he looked into her face.

"I obey," he said.

"You obey," the Empress cried, "you poor, miserable specimen of a cur, of course you obey. And

you will do more. Find for me these miserable worms who have grown so bold that they kill my messengers. Learn for me why on the brow of each there is always the image of a bird. Learn this, I tell you, and come and tell me in order that I may deal with them. I will give you twenty-four hours. If at the end of that time you cannot give me the information I want, then let me tell you that you will have to eat birds, see birds, live with birds and die with birds. I will give you to the birds, and after you are dead there will be birds all over you. Be gone. Take your poor miserable self out of my sight and never return unless you can tell me what I want to know. And now send me my trusty Captain of the Guards. He is the only one I can now trust to deliver my message to the Emperor."

Chu Lung glided out of the room. Hardly had he disappeared when a tall, splendidly built man, with a figure which showed strength and tremendous power, the Captain of the Guard, almost filled the doorway. His manner was courteous, yet there was not one trace of fear in his expression.

"You have sent for me?" The deep tones of his voice vibrated through the room.

"Yes, Captain, I have sent for you. I need you," answered the Empress. "Sad as it may seem, I think the time has come when the young Emperor will be happier if he should leave this troublesome world and dwell with the spirits of his ancestors. He is a nice boy, and I hate to think of his being troubled and harassed with the cares of this world.

I have tried to send a number of messengers to him, but they have all failed. The birds got them, they traveled so slowly. You are my last hope. I have a package which I want delivered to the Emperor. Its contents I will tell you when you are ready to depart. Are you afraid? Had you rather I would send one of your men? Perhaps the task is too hard a one for you? Or perhaps you fear the birds will get you. If you have not the courage, then depart and send me one of your men who knows no fear."

Slowly the hand of the Captain came to the salute. On each cheek came a flush, and his eyes glittered strangely.

"Your commands, my Majesty," was all he said.

With a look of deep admiration the Empress called him to her, and handing him a package, she half whispered her directions.

"Must it be done?" said the Captain.

"You have your orders," was all the Empress said.

The face of Rami, whose ear had been pressed closely to the wall in the next room, grew white. She glided over to the window and a bit of lace floated downward toward the garden. Then quickly taking brush and ink she drew on a piece of paper a whole flock of birds and at the bottom she drew a figure of a man and then wrote one word, "Captain."

No sooner had the lace touched the ground when Lee—for it was he who had been working in the garden—saw it, picked it up and then he waited.

A piece of paper fluttered down. He covered it with his foot and not until he felt sure that no one was watching did he stoop to pick it up. A glance at it and his day's work was over. He left the garden.

THE BIRDS IN THE WOODS

The Captain of the Guard was nearing his journey's end. One night more and early the next day he could deliver his package. He had had a troublesome journey. Nothing had gone right since he started. At the very gates of the palace he had stumbled over a loose paving stone which he felt sure had never been loose before. Every man he passed seemed strangely interested in him. Some were even bold enough to speak to him. All seemed to place something in his path.

At a tea house he had been given something which made him strangely dizzy. When he awoke after sleeping, his room was always filled with birds. If he rested under a tree by the roadside and took a nap, he always found paper birds on the ground beside him when he woke.

If he asked his way, he was always sent in the wrong direction. And now near the end of his journey he had grown thin and haggard. He hardly dared to eat, sleep, or rest. It was only his great strength that was pulling him through.

Thoroughly apprehensive, he had made up his mind not to spend the last night in the public house. From a little bakeshop he bought some bread, and leaving the road, he made his way into a little wood. Seating himself with his back to a tree, he ate his

bread and prepared to spend the night. His precious package he felt of to be sure that nothing had happened to it. Slowly darkness settled about him, but before he slept he heard the cries of strange birds all about him, and brave as he was, he could not help the little shivers which crept up and down his back.

A twig cracked near him and he started up. He did not hear the sound repeated, so he settled back, but his right hand grasped firmly the handle of a small sword whose naked blade rested by his side. Then, acting on impulse, in the darkness he did a strange thing. Without making a sound he got onto his feet and, taking from around his waist a coil of silken cord, stretched it from tree to tree about a foot above the ground. When he had completed the circle and firmly fastened both ends, he went to his big tree, and making himself as comfortable as possible, he leaned back to sleep.

But the hilt of his small sword was buried in the ground beside him, and its sharp point protected his breast. And it was well for him that he had so arranged it, for creeping through the woods an hour later, Lee made out in the darkness the figure of the man he had been following and he heard his heavy breathing as he slept.

Cautiously he approached, and when near he made up his mind that a quick rush and a swift blow was his best plan. So drawing his knife he sprung forward. The invisible rope caught his feet, and before he could recover himself, he fell and received the sharp point of the short sword in his left breast.

The days of Lee were over. The impact of his body woke the Captain. His groping hands pushed aside the lifeless body. Drawing out his sword he wiped it as best he could on the sod beside him, and kicking the body away, he again buried the hilt of his sword in the ground, with the sharp point pointing upwards to protect his breast.

And when morning came, he arose and, searching the garments of Lee, he found a number of little paper golden birds, and when he found them he smiled.

"Not all birds strike home at night," was all he said. And feeling again for his package, he left the woods and went to fulfill the commands of the Empress.

* * *

The mother of Chang was worried. For weeks she had received little notes from Rami, and always in one corner there was the picture of a flying bird, but yesterday there had been thrown in at her window a sketch of a whole flock of birds flying, and that morning another had been found, and looking out of a window she had seen one-eyed Sam making his way down the alley and she was worried. Late in the afternoon she received word from Sam that Lee was no more. He had been found dead in the woods with an ugly wound in his breast, and his knife in his hand, and scattered all about him were numbers of little golden paper birds. But not one of them was on his brow. The picture on which the note was written was all covered with flying birds.

The Emperor was dining when the Captain reached his palace, and the attendants were unwilling to admit him. Showing, however, the seal of the Empress, he paid no attention to them and fairly brushed them aside as he made his way into the presence of the Emperor. Startled, the Emperor half rose, then recognizing the seal of the Empress, he settled back, while over his face crept a look which seemed to say, "At last, it has come."

Slowly the Captain undid the package which he had so safely guarded, and taking out a ball of opium, some gold leaf and a silken cord, he placed them in front of the Emperor, saying, "The Empress, Her Majesty, sends these to you with her compliments, and she bids me tell you that unless you make good use of them, I shall on my return see to it that her commands are obeyed. Permit me now, your Majesty, to take my leave. In four hours I will return, and may the good Spirits have welcomed you before then, for though her Majesty's stern commands make my heart most heavy, yet they must be obeyed."

Then turning, the Empress's messenger glided swiftly from the room.

The attendants shrank away from him and stood gazing silently at their Emperor, who sat looking at the objects before him. Suddenly his decision was made. Quickly taking the ball of opium in his hand, he placed it in his mouth and swallowed it before any of the faithful about him could prevent him.

Rising to his feet, the Emperor then made his way with head erect to his bed-room, and stretching himself on his couch, he calmly waited for the call to join the spirits of his ancestors. And little birds flew out of the windows of the palace and they all flew away in the same direction, in the direction of the palace of the Empress.

WHAT THE BIRDS DID

Impatiently the Empress was walking up and down her reception room. "It is time my messenger was here. It is now four days since he departed." Scarcely had she finished speaking when her Captain stood before her.

"Your Majesty," he said, "I return to you the gold leaf and the silken cord. It is my duty to report that the Emperor is no more. He has sent to you his loving greetings and wishes me to say that he is happy with the spirits of his ancestors."

" 'Tis well," said the Empress. "You have done your duty, and I now make you the guardian of the treasures. At the meeting of my councilors, which I shall quickly call, you are to take your place on my right, where I can conveniently consult with you."

Bowing with appreciation, the new guardian of the treasures backed from the room. As he departed a bird flew into the room and flew straight at the Empress. As she saw it her face grew pale and she shrilly called upon her attendants to kill it.

"Kill it quickly, I command you."

Then she shuffled her way slowly to her bedchamber. There was a great fear in her heart. She

looked all about her. She examined the walls. She looked at every door. She was all of a tremble. Every sound made her start. She kept calling for first one person and then another, but no sooner would they appear than she would command them to leave her. And it was far into the night before she had the courage to lie down to rest.

And what happened that night no one ever really knew. For some hours, at intervals, there were heard shrill, birdlike calls all about the palace. Blinds and silken draperies moved in curious unseen ways. There was a smothered cry now and then, but when morning broke there was a deathlike stillness all about and the Empress was found half hanging over the side of her couch, and on her forehead was fastened the outline of a bird fashioned from pure gold, and on one of its wings was inscribed " 'Tis Finished."

Chang's mother was fairly beside herself. Not one word had she received from Chang since the death of the Emperor, and a great fear was in her heart.

Suddenly Sam stood before her, and in each hand he held a scroll. "All is well" was his greeting, and then slowly he unrolled one of the scrolls. It was a picture of a housetop, and all over the roof were little birds, some trying to straighten out their feathers—others simply resting.

Then he unrolled the other scroll, and from it Chang's mother learned that all was well with her son, and that soon Rami and he would send for her to join them in the new home that they would have —in the far north of China.

"SOME FISH"

I HATE to tell a fish story because there always seems to be an element of untruth about it. But this one was told to me by an old Maine guide and it was told in such a timid, bashful way, that I cannot help repeating it.

We were looking over a pretty good sized "laker" —fourteen or fifteen pounds—which was hanging up on the piazza at the Kineo House. I happened to remark that I thought that it was a pretty good sized fish. "Yes," said the guide, "'tis for these days." "For these days!" I said. "What did they used to catch in Moosehead?"

"Oh," he says. "They used to catch a great deal larger. Years ago my father was canoeing with an old Indian up along Deer Island. The water was pretty smooth. 'Twas the early spring. Father was trolling. All of a sudden he got a strike, just as they came to the head of the island. Father knew it was a good one by the way he took hold. He got him well hooked and he came hard. At times he almost broke water. Finally he got him pretty well alongside and was about to give him the gaff when the old Indian said: 'Look here! Don't gaff him. He make fine bait. He well hooked. You troll him.'

"So father just payed out his line slowly, and the old Indian he just paddled along, going up in the direction across to Lilly Bay. All of a sudden

the canoe stopped right up short. Father thought sure that he had bottom. Then the line slacked up a little and then away it went towards the upper end of the lake. Fortunately father had line enough and he just let him have it. Once in a while he would check him a little, but he could not do much with him. The old Indian he just sat and smiled. He never offered to help father. First the canoe would head up the lake and then it would take a swing off towards the West Outlet. At no time did it point towards shallow water."

I have often thought I would have liked to have seen that fish playing with that canoe.

"After they had been riding around for about two hours there was something about the way the line acted that made the old Indian take up his paddle again. 'Don't try pull him,' he said, 'We pull him ashore. He too big fish to try to land in this canoe.' And he started paddling just as hard as he could. At times father had to let out more line. That fish did not want to come. But he got tired after a while. Then father took in a little line, just enough to keep him coming. They paddled right up to one of those beaches just this side of Lilly Bay. They ran the canoe ashore and then both of them took hold on the line. Finally they landed that fish. Father never would tell me how big that fish was. Pretty hard work. He wouldn't say how large he was. He wouldn't say how long he was or how much he thought he weighed. All he would say about him was that he was SIX FEET BETWEEN THE EYES. That was some fish, stranger."

"ANOTHER FISH STORY."

SOMEHOW there is a great difference in fish stories. Most of them sound plausible enough, but there's a certain something about them that makes one question whether they really happened.

I never heard a Canadian guide tell a story similar to one told by a Maine guide. Stories do not seem to drift across the border. One would think, with all the fishermen and hunters who go from one place to the other, that stories would travel with them. But I have listened evening after evening to stories told by a Canadian guide and never heard him repeat the ones I have heard from the Maine guides.

A Canadian guide once told me that one day he was out trolling on one of the big lakes in Algonquin Park. He was trolling with copper wire. He'd just got it. You know they use copper wire up there to troll with; the fish are so big. All of a sudden he hooked a fish. He couldn't move it. He paddled just as hard as he could, but the fish would not move. Finally he got discouraged and all tired out. So he just payed out a lot of wire and went ashore on one of the Islands. Then he took the end of the copper wire and made it fast to a good sized tree on the shore. Then he tried to pull him in. But 'twas no use. He had to give it up and go for help. He paddled down to the end of the Lake and went over the portage to where he knew there was a

fellow camping. He got the fellow to come back with him.

He swears that when they got to where he had tied that copper wire to the tree on the Island THERE WASN'T ANY ISLAND THERE.

That's another good fish story.

"NO SNAKE AT ALL."

I AM inclined to think that there are more snakes in Canada than there are in Maine. At least there are more snake stories. A Canadian guide once told me that he was coming down along a portage with a big pack on his back, when all of a sudden he heard a noise behind him. He took one look over his shoulder and saw a big snake following him down the path. He just stepped into the bushes and let that snake go by. All of a sudden he saw another snake following the first one. He followed them along just to see what was going to happen. The second snake was going faster than the first one, and soon he caught up with him. When he caught up with him he took him right by the tail. The first snake then turned and took the second snake by the tail. They went right at it, and by and by they ate each other all up and there was NO SNAKE AT ALL.

I told that guide that probably they were black snakes and that it was so dark that he could not see them. He said, "NO. They were striped snakes."

SWAN ISLAND AND THE BOYS FROM THE GRAND CAYMANS

THE tropical sun dropped into the Caribbean Sea and the short twilight began. The snails ceased to crawl along the beach, and soon there was only the rustling of the fronds of the cocoanut palms as they were waved by the trade wind. One by one the stars came out and the moon, rising from the sea, sent its silver rays across the crescent shaped harbor, in front of the bungalow.

Seated in a rocking chair made from the roots of a Fustic tree, a young man dressed in pongee was smoking his pipe and gazing out over the water, through the wire screening of the veranda.

Occasionally there was heard the soft thud of some flying insect as it struck against the screen. From the servants' quarters came the hum of voices and once in a while could be heard the soft notes of a crude musical instrument. Frequently, a laugh would accent the stillness.

From the cook's shack came the rattle of dishes being washed. And the sharp, "Say, get out of here. You goll darn lazy boy. Don't you know this aint no place for you? Don't you know I aint got nothin' for you? So help me, I ain't got no tobac. Just what the boss gave me for my pipe.

"Give you part of that? Well, I guess not. You sure are one great big beggar. The place for you

is back on that Grand Cayman Island where you come from.

"How long you been on this Island, anyhow? No, I don't want to hear about that storm you had last winter. It's stormy enough here when that steamer from New Orleans don't come on time when she says she will.

"Know where you can get a turtle tomorrow? That's different. I guess I can find a little tobac for you. Here you are. Now run along.

"But say, if you don't fetch that turtle for me tomorrow, I sure will cut you up so that you will be only too glad to be salted down. Do you hear?"

The man in the rocking chair smiled. He had learned to know and grow fond of those children from the Grand Cayman Islands, and it always amused him to see and hear how, in their childlike way, they always got what they wanted out of Sam, the cook, who was born and brought up in New Orleans and had drifted to the Island to do the cooking for the mess.

Suddenly there came the hum of the wireless; sharp, intermittent, and penetrating, sending messages to the passing United Fruit steamers.

The revolving light on one of the wireless towers illuminated the front of the bungalow every ten seconds. One of these flashes showed the form of a man standing near the steps, hat in hand.

"Good evening, Mr. Nelson. I done wanted to know if I could do any washin' for you? You see my foot is still a little sore and I can't go into the brush tomorrow and I kind of thought perhaps there

might be somethin' I might do for you."

"Yes, Charlie, I think there is. You come around in the morning and I will give it to you."

"It kind of looks, Mr. Nelson, as if it might blow up pretty well soon. I sure would hate to see a Northeaster at this time of the year. There's the launch over in Jacobson's Bay and if it is going to blow from the Northeast she should be brought around early in the mornin' and anchored inside the reef."

"All right Charlie, tell Tom to see to it."

"That was some fish you caught this mornin'. I felt sure that you had hooked a good Barracout when I seen you pullin' in."

"Yes, that was a good fish, Charlie. Have a cigar."

"Thanks, Mr. Nelson."

"We had a great gale in the Caymans last winter. Never seen such a blow in all my life. The night before she started it was just such a night as this; so clear you could see the shark fins in the Bay. But, bless my soul, how it did blow the next mornin'. My brother and I stood out on the cliffs and watched the waves come rollin' in, and believe me, we could not see how anything could live in such a Sea. Why, Mr. Nelson, it was something awful. My brother said he knew it was comin', 'cause the night before a big eguina got on his bed and cried like a baby.

"Long towards night there came a lull and then she started in worse than ever. I had just made up my mind to go to bed when I seen a schooner

comin' right straight for the big bluff. She didn't have no sails. She was just plowin' along under bare poles. I seen a man at the helm trying to steer her clear. I knew he was lashed to the helm by the way he stood, and he looked mighty weak even as far off as he was. There wasn't much use trying to do anything; she was headed straight for the rocks. There never was a life boat that could live in such a sea. We watched her until she struck on the rocks and the sea poured over her; then we watched the rocks along the shore, but didn't see anything that night. The next morning all that came ashore was a leg and a lot of driftwood. I tell you what, Mr. Nelson, I don't want to see no eguina crying on my bed.

"If it don't blow too hard, Mr. Nelson, why don't you try fishing round by James Bay?"

"Think I will, Charlie. Don't forget to tell Tom I want to see him first thing in the morning."

"All right, Mr. Nelson. Good night."

"Good night, Charlie."

The flash from the revolving light lit up the path to the men's quarters and Charlie shambled along to turn in.

Soon the hum of the wireless ceased, and shortly afterwards all lights were out.

The young man in pongee remained sitting and smoking. Finally the chill of the tropical night caused him to shiver. He arose, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and with one last look North, he went into the bungalow, undressed and got into bed. But before he put out his light he looked around

the room to see if some stray eguina had gotten in.

The light on the wireless tower flashed steadily through the night. The trade wind rustled through the cocoanut walks, while the waves licked their way around the small concrete landing; casting up little moonlit sprays over the barnacle-covered foundation. It was one of those marvelous nights on Swan Island, full of wonderful dreams of events in other spots in the world. And when the first light of the coming day showed itself, the sleeper in the bungalow opened his eyes and watched the coming. Gradually the light spread and then, all of a sudden, it was day, and immediately everything became alive.

Insects butted against the screens. Snails commenced to crawl. The hermit crabs went looking for larger shells to move into. The boobies flew from the rocks. The waves on the shore made more noise.

Sam, the cook, yelled for his helper. "Get out of that bunk, you yellow son of the Grand Cayman! Ain't you going to wake up at all? Don't you know we got to get some breakfast this morning? Better hurry up or Mr. Nelson won't take you for no fishin'.

By five-thirty the coffee was ready and Nelson had had his shower and was dressed for the day. Half an hour later five or six blows on an old tripod hanging outside of the mess hall gave the signal for breakfast, and one by one the wireless men,

dressed in white linen and duck, gathered at the table.

It was a motley crowd of young men from the States. They were all clear of eye and their rolled-up sleeves showed arms browned deeply by the sun, with each muscle displaying its outlines.

There were six of them.

The chief operator was a man about twenty-five; of splendid physique. A broad deep chest with powerful arms and legs, and an abdomen so flat that his belt caused fear it was cutting him in two. He had spent five or six years in the Navy before taking a position with the United Fruit Company.

"Good morning, fellows. Damn the static! Tried for an hour last night to hear New Orleans. They were trying to say something about a big storm gathering in the Gulf, and wanted me to let the Abanganz know about it. It will be a great day for the wireless men when some fellow gets up something to get the better of static."

"What's the matter this morning, Chief?" said a skinny looking young man, who was one of the oilers. Haven't cut your foot on an old crab shell, have you?"

"Mind your own business, Jackson. If you will only keep that motor for the little launch in order, I will forgive you. Where is Mr. Nelson this morning? Ah, here he comes."

"Good morning, Mr. Nelson. I hope you slept well."

"Not so you'd notice it, Chief. Was dreaming of eguinas all night. That boy, Pete, filled me full of

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superstition last evening. Told me about a big eguina getting on his brother's bed the night before a big storm and crying like a baby."

"We will have to get Sam to kill and cook one for you, Mr. Nelson. They say in Caymans that that is the only way to get over the superstition in regard to them."

"Then I will have the superstition all my life, Chief, for I never could eat one of those horrible looking things."

"Excuse me, Mr. Nelson," said Sam, who had just entered the room with a big dish of fried eggs. I wouldn't say that about eguinae. They sure know a whole lot, and I have learned to be very careful what I say about them. Last spring I was tryin' to raise some chicks down by the old well. One morning I seen a big eguina running by the cook house door. Says I to him, 'Get out of here you damn, ugly looking beast.' He kind of turned his ugly face towards me and gave me one look. The next morning my chickens were all gone. You have to be kind of careful what you say about those gentlemen. You sure do, Mr. Nelson."

"Oh, bunch, Sam!" said a light-haired fellow named Scott, who was sitting on one side of the table. He was the night operator and as usual was not in good humor until he had his breakfast.

"I laughed at one the other morning and he went away and brought back three others."

"Of course he did, Mr. Scott," said Sam. "He probably knew you'd only laughed once a year and he fetched the family to see you."

"Oh, go to the devil, Sam."

The Chief rapped on the table. "That will do, Sam. Hustle and get me some bacon."

"Here comes Pete. I guess he wants to speak with you, Mr. Nelson." Pete soon appeared in the doorway, hat in hand. "Can't make the launch go, Mr. Nelson. Better take the old seine boat and the boys, if you want to go fishin' this morning."

"All right, Charlie. Get the seine boat into the water and let me know when you are ready. Be sure that we have bait enough, and take along a bottle or two of water."

"Yes, sir."

"How's the wind, Charlie?"

"Working around into the North. Funny weather we are havin' this March. Can't seem to tell much about it."

"Then we had better try the fishing up between the Islands, Charlie. For if it should start up blowing too hard we can come home along the South Shore. Be sure and look my lines over and take the kinks out of that long trolling one. You know the one; it's marked every ten fathoms with a red mark."

"Sure, I know that line, Mr. Nelson. That's the one we got anchored to the old reef with, the day you almost caught the big Queen fish. I shall always think that if she had not doubled around that reef she would have landed us on Honduras. I never seen such a fish for towin' a boat in all my life. The way we went sailin' by the point and you hangin' on for dear life. That sure was some fish.

How much do you think she would have weighed, Mr. Nelson?"

"Oh, I don't know, Charlie. Some of them, they say, weigh close on to 150 pounds. But run along and get the boat ready. Do you want to stand there all day talking?"

"No, sir, Mr. Nelson. I wasn't talkin'. I was just askin' questions."

Off walked Charlie down the shell path to the wharf; every once in a while stepping between the rails of the little narrow gauge railroad track—the one solid reminder of the days when phosphate was shipped from the Island to the States before the big deposits were discovered in Florida.

Charlie's idea of hurry was to start and then take his time about getting there. As he passed the men's quarters he yelled out: "Here, all of yous in there, come along! Don't you know you have got to take Mr. Nelson fishin' today?" You old man Hawkes, you stay home and wait on that colored cook. He ain't nothin' but a New Orleans nigger. Tries to make us think that all colored men are alike. He can't put that over on us English subjects."

Sam the cook heard him and, taking his big cleaver, he started down the path after Charlie. Charlie heard him coming and, seeing the cleaver, started to hurry, at the same time yelling back over his shoulder: "Didn't mean nothing, Mr. Cook. I'll bring that turtle to you tonight after dinner."

Sam stopped, and giving one shake of the cleaver at the fleeing Charlie, he turned back towards the

cook house muttering something about putting "Manchineel" in that nigger's food. Getting into the kitchen he drove the cleaver into the chopping block with all his might and sat down to cool off.

"Fine climate this, when one can't run a few steps without getting all het up. Sure to God, I wish I was back in good old Mississippi. Never have to run there, and don't get so damn hot. What for did I ever come to this God-forsaken spot for anyhow."

The sound of the tackles were heard as the old seine boat was being lowered into the water. The Grand Cayman boy in her yelled as the bow took a sudden dip before the stern, piling him up in a heap.

"Here you, watch out! Didn't you ever lower no boat before? You is a damn lazy cuss, Banks. Can't you hold your end up?"

"Oh, shut up!" said Banks.

"Don't you talk that way to me, Mr. Man. I'll put an eguina in your bed tonight, sure as my name is William Banks."

Right side up the seine boat took to the water, and down the boys slid on the tackles. Some went to bailing her out; others fitted the oars into row locks. The water bottles were passed down, and the bait and lines thrown in.

The tackles were cast off and, tossed by the waves which were breaking on the pier, the old seine boat was pushed along to the steps cut in the side of the concrete. Nelson was waiting for her and, stepping in, he gave the order to push off.

Charlie was seated in the stern handling the rudder ropes. Yell followed yell until he got his crew working nearly together. Just as the boat passed the end of a quay, she shipped a good sea—a great big greenish blue fellow with a white top.

"Here, you lazy cusses, don't you know how to handle a boat? Don't want to drown Mr. Nelson, do you? He don't like those big sharks in the Bay. Drop that oar, Charlie Banks, and bail out. You pull harder, Henry Banks, so as to keep her head up. And you Peter Banks, help him out."

"There, that's better. Now steady. Pull together! Mr. Nelson has promised all some tobac if he gets a good fish."

"Never said that in the world, Charlie, but as long as you have said it, I will," said Nelson.

"All right, Mr. Nelson, you can let out your line now."

The old seine boat slowly gained headway. The men in her pulled a short, shallow stroke. Each man bracing his toes on the thwart in front of him.

It was remarkable how those Cayman boys handled the big awkward boat in the sea that was running.

They turned the west end of the Island and slowly shoved her along by the Big Quay. As they passed close to the rocks hundreds of boobies rose and circled overhead. Once in a while one would fly close over the boat, as if trying to see what was going on. Little shrill cries were heard. At times one of them would make a sudden dash into the

water, and, quickly turning, would come up with a small fish. Off she then would go in the direction of the Little Island, her home.

The shore grew rougher in outline. Huge rocks with their bases eroded by the sea stood out like mushrooms.

In places the sea had worn its way under some projecting coral point and was swishing noisily under the bridge it had formed.

As the water grew smooth under the protecting lea of the shore, one could look down twenty or thirty feet into the deep blue and see the white bottom with innumerable fish swimming about.

With a quick yank on his line, Nelson stood up in the boat and commenced to pull in.

"Keep her steady, boys! You sure have got a small shark, Mr. Nelson," said Charlie. How he knew what the fish was he never told.

It was a hard task pulling him in. Every once in a while the line would slip through Nelson's fingers in spite of all he could do. Then the line would become slack as the fish headed for the boat. Again would come a great yank as if it headed off at right angles. Finally the fish broke water about fifty feet from the stern. But it broke it in a lazy kind of way as if it found it easier to be yanked along on the surface.

As the fish was brought close to the boat, Nelson passed the line up to one of the boys in the bow and Charlie stood ready to gaff. It was a small shark.

Several of the boys helped lift the brute over the

gunwale. "You boys look out for him. He sure is some dangerous fish," yelled Charlie. He spoke too late. The shark flopped and took a piece out of the lower leg of one of the boys. The yell he gave could have been heard in Cuba.

The other boys fell upon the flopping fish. One of them drew his case knife and quickly cut off the shark's tail. The hook was yanked out of his jaw and over the side he was thrown.

"Now some other shark eat him," said Charlie; "he can't get away."

The hook wes re-baited, and again the line fell astern. They were now approaching the eastern end of the Island. "Good place here for Barracout," said Charlie. Hardly had he spoken when Nelson felt a yank on his line which nearly took him out of the boat. "Keep pulling," he yelled. Then the fun began. Way astern a beautiful fish jumped clear out of the water and shook himself in a vain effort to get free. Then off he started for deeper water.

The line fairly hummed across the stern post. Nelson did his best to check it at intervals. It was lucky he had gloves on. No human skin could have stood the running of that line. Out of the water the fish came again. This time 'way to one side as if he were trying another game to get free. Then he came head-on and Nelson had to work to keep the line taut. Out of the water he jumped on the other side of the boat. Off he went for deeper water again. This time he was not so speedy—his open jaws and the inrushing water were getting the

better of him. Gradually Nelson drew him. A well placed gaff landed him in the boat and there he laid a weary fighter of the southern seas.

Charlie gave him a good rap on the nose with the end of a boat hook, and after a few flops the game sport laid quiet. He was a fine fish of about twenty pounds weight.

It was a great morning for fishing, and before nine o'clock Nelson had landed half a dozen good ones.

Order was given to make for home, and with a will the Cayman boys bent to the oars and shoved the old boat along at a fairly good speed.

Nelson lit his pipe and watched the boobies circling overhead, almost daring the swoop down for one of the fish in the bottom of the boat. At times he could have almost touched one as it flew close to his head.

"Strange bird, that boobie," said Charlie. "He is just as stupid as a New Orleans nigger. He does nothing but fish."

"What do you expect a bird to do, Charlie?"

"What I mean is, Mr. Nelson, he fishes for those frigate birds. Now you watch; there comes a frigate bird."

The wind is blowing just hard enough for the frigate bird to come out, and he probably is hungry. A boobie swooped down into the water and took up a fish with him. The frigate bird made one dash at the boobie and he dropped the fish. With one swoop the frigate bird descended and scooped it up.

"That's the way those frigate birds get their livin', Mr. Nelson."

Off the frigate sailed, straight into the wind. It did not fly, it just sailed. Watch it as closely as possible, one could not see its wings move.

"That bird has gotten an air ship beaten a mile," thought Mr. Nelson, as he wound up his line.

The sun was getting pretty hot and all were glad when the landing was reached, and the old seine boat once more hoisted up on the davits.

One of the boys proceeded to clean the fish, and as he worked he threw scraps over into the water. Looking down from the wharf, one could see schools of small fish feeding on them, while on the surface floated the long, thin Garr fish, looking for their share.

THE STORM

A lonely eguina stood motionless way out on the very end of a rocky point. His quaint old face was turned to the north and he cried plaintively. The sea beat up against the loose rocks below and threw spray after spray high in the air.

Far to the north there was a little black spot on the horizon. The black spot grew and came rolling southwest. And as it rolled, it spread and darkened the edge of the sea wider and wider.

The plaintive cry of the eguina came more frequently and the sea near the shore turned a darker and darker blue, the trade wind ceasing to blow; even the leaves on the trees were still.

The cocoanut trees, bent by other storms, leaned as they had grown, without any apparent excuse

for leaning, for their fronds were still and hung lifeless.

There was scarcely a bird to be seen, and the few there were soon disappeared.

The big cloud rolled from the northeast and the sea became black under it; and then came the first blast of the wind. It roughened the sea, and as it reached the land, it swept up and carried along everything that was loose and light. Old cocoanut fronds came flopping to the ground. Piles of cocoanut husks commenced to tumble, sending the rats under them scurrying for a safer hiding place.

The blast passed on and then the sea commenced to roll in. At first it hurled itself against the concrete wharf in the usual way and only sent its spray over the top.

The boys from the Grand Caymans were hustling about putting every loose article inside the concrete storehouse.

The two small boats were hauled high on the beach and turned over. The old seine boat on the davits was lashed more securely. Every box on the wharf was put in the storehouse, and every coil of rope carefully stowed away.

Darkness settled. The lonely eguina slid from his post, and with head half turned, as if to keep watch of what was coming, he felt his way along until he came to an opening in the rock into which he disappeared.

Then there came a roar as if a thousand wild animals had been suddenly let loose. The wind no longer lifted the light objects; it hurled them along.

Old dead trees were broken off close to the ground. Live trees bent more and more. No chance was given them to spring back; they remained bent. The gale tore its way through them. One near the shore suddenly broke off and fell against the next.

The gale screeched and rose in its might. It no longer tore its way between the trees—it tore at them. First, one by one, and then ten by ten, they cracked off and fell. Soon a whole cocoanut walk was lying flat and only a few slender trees remained. The gale allowed them to remain and swept on.

The waves ceased to beat against the wharf. They simply ignored it and roared over it. The upper part only of the storehouse could be seen; and the sea ripped away, first at one corner and then at another, seeking to find some poorly secured part to destroy.

Then the rain came; big drops at first, then curtains of big and little ones. Then perfect sheets. It was not a rain storm. All the air in the world suddenly turned into water and fell on the Island.

At the Wireless Station everything was in confusion. First one and then another of the tall towers had come crashing down. Three had fallen in all. The huge iron beams had dug holes in the ground when they landed and the air was filled with loose ends of antellae and wire guys.

The gale had ripped at the sheet iron roofs of the buildings. On one or two of them it had found loose ends and had torn the sheets from the remaining fastenings. Finding a loop-hole, the gale had

twisted and torn apart the very buildings themselves.

Sheets of iron and twisted beams of wood were carried along a few feet from the ground, and what the wind failed to do, these objects accomplished when they struck against anything in their path.

Most of the little wooden buildings on the side of the path leading to the wharf were torn apart and crumpled to pieces. The Grand Cayman boys getting in the lea of one which was low enough and stout enough to resist the gale, laid on the ground. Every boy was praying as hard as he could pray.

"I done told that man not to say anythin' against those gentlemen Eguina," said Sam, as he ducked his head away from a huge limb of a tree which came sailing over him. "I done told him, and so help me, I will give them all the chickens I can find, if only this gale will stop blowin'. There go all my new dish cloths.

"Oh, Lord, what have I done that I should be on this Island in such a blow as this?

"Next thing we know they will be sending an earthquake along and then a tidal wave, and we will all be swept into the sea.

"There go my dish pans right into the bay. Never will I see them again. There's only one thing about it, I won't have nothing to cook any dinner with tonight. I would just like to know what has happened to those sweet potatoes I had in the oven?

"Oh, goodness me, there goes my oven now. I never did see anything like this in Mississippi."

IN "49"

BY Jove! There's a brook at last." And Tom Langford leaned over, and patting the neck of his horse, said: "Cheer up, old girl, you're going to have a good long drink." The hot, tired horse half turned its head and one kindly eye looked at her owner as much as to say, "Are you sure?"

A few minutes' ride brought them both to the side of a brook which had bubbled up from the earth and was gurgling along over its rocky bed, in the direction of a small clump of trees. Both horse and man were thoroughly worn out. The hot sun had beaten down upon them and the dust of the prairie had filled their nostrils until both were much in need of a refreshing drink.

At the brook Tom threw the bridle over his horse's neck and half tumbled out of the saddle. For a moment he was somewhat unsteady on his feet; then pulling himself together, he attended to his friend first. A strong tug at the girth and the saddle was loose. Unbuckling the bridle, he slipped the bit out of the horse's mouth, but before allowing her to drink, he rubbed her withers carefully with clumps of grass, and holding her by the mane, poured some of the cool water over her head and threw it on her flanks. When satisfied that she could drink with safety, he let her poke her nose into the brook a few feet from where it bubbled out of the ground, while he himself took his

long-needed drink nearer the source. He did not allow the horse to drink much at first, but checking her, he slipped the bridle on again, and taking off the saddle and saddle bags, he allowed her to take a roll or two. When she came to her feet he replaced the saddle, and before tightening the girths he allowed her to drink more freely. Then he threw the bridle over his arm, and walking beside her, he made his way to the clump of trees.

As he walked, he looked about him and discerned a small farmhouse half hidden by a knoll. It looked deserted but in good repair. "Owner's away, I guess," said Tom to himself. As they got into the shade of the trees and stood resting, Tom was surprised to see in the center of the clump a small grass plot, in the center of which was a mound and at one end of the mound was a fine marble stone into which was chiseled,

"Melvin Adams of Mores."
"June 20, 1849"

"Queer place for a duck to be buried so long ago as that," said Tom to himself. "Must have been brought back here." Then he thought of the train he must catch for the East, and tightening up the girths, he mounted into the saddle and giving his faithful companion a pat on the neck, he turned her head to the East and pushed on to deliver his report on the mining claims which he had been examining for some Eastern capitalists.

* * *

In one of the old houses in Washington Square,

New York, there was a dinner being given in honor of Tom Langford, the mining engineer, who had recently returned from the West with a splendid report on some copper properties in which the host was greatly interested. The host, a great, big red-faced man with a jolly laugh, sat at one end of the long table, while his wife, a little woman dressed quietly in black, sat at the other. It was a mixed party and a number of young ladies had been invited to meet Tom and see what a half Westerner looked like.

It was in the good old boom times under a Republican administration, and everyone was talking stocks and business. Even the women joined in and made mental notes when some good stock or another was mentioned which had good prospects of an extra dividend soon.

Tom was seated on the right of his hostess and on his right there was a young lady of twenty or twenty-two. Her great blue eyes had closely watched Tom during the early part of the dinner when he was talking to his hostess, and she was startled out of her reverie when Tom, turning quickly, said to her in a rather breezy Western way, "Would you mind telling me your name? I did not catch it." "Certainly not," she said, "we have been properly introduced."

"I know," said Tom, "but I have met so many, and I had rather know your name than that of any of the others." "Many thanks for the compliment," she said. "My name is Jane Armstrong and I

come from a place in New York State. You probably have never heard of Mores, M-o-r-e-s."

"Mores?" said Tom. "Did you ever hear of a family by the name of Adams there?"

"Why surely," said Miss Armstrong. "My mother's name was Adams. But why do you ask?"

And then he told her of the lonely grave way out on the prairie, and when he told her that on the stone there was the inscription—"Melvin Adams of Mores"—Miss Armstrong's eyes grew big, and she turned quickly towards him. "Are you sure?" she said.

"Certainly," he said. "Why do you ask?"

"Only for this reason," was the reply. "My mother had an older brother who, when the gold craze was driving the whole country mad, joined a party to go across the Continent and seek his fortune. My mother has often told me the story. For a while she heard from him at irregular intervals, and then one day came a letter in a strange handwriting. It did not come from any particular place, and all that was written was that her brother was very ill. And shortly after came another letter written in the same hand, and it told my mother that her brother was dead—and that is all she ever heard. You see she did not know any of the men he started out with." And the great blue eyes grew dim.

"I am truly sorry to have brought up such a painful subject," said Tom. "I will tell you what I will do. I have got to go West again soon and I will look up that grave, and when I return I will

tell you all about it, if you will allow me to call and do so."

"I most certainly will," said Jane. And then Tom had to turn again to his hostess, as the dinner was about over. After the dinner, Tom was entertained by the host with a series of yarns, and the party broke up without his speaking to Jane again, and it was only as he was saying good-night to his hostess that he caught a glance from Jane's blue eyes. And as he left the room he got a slight little nod and a flicker of a smile, the memory of which lingered with him for many a long day.

* * *

Months later in the far West, an old farmer standing in his doorway saw a lone horseman approaching over the prairie, and as he approached the farmer shaded his eyes with his left hand and instinctively felt of his right hip pocket with the other. Noticing, however, that the rider was hand free, the farmer dropped his right hand to his side and walked leisurely to the fence in front of his home. He stood leaning against one of the posts as the horseman approached.

"Mornin', stranger," said the farmer, as the rider threw his leg over the pummel and slid to the ground. "Goin' far?"

"Morning," said Tom Langford. For he it was, who, returning once again from the mines, was keeping his promise to Jane Armstrong. "I am not going far, only to the station at Chyote. Bound East, you know. Have had a rough time of it up at the mines and am eager to get into God's own country."

"What's the matter with this for God's own country?" said the farmer. "You might travel many a mile and not find a spot like it. You must be particular. I have been up Broadway when all the lights were lit and all the girls were out, but for a real, good rest, give me this place. I have rested here now nigh onto forty years, and I guess I am pretty well rested. It took most of those forty years to get over four trips to New York, and I don't know but what it will take twenty more to pay for them."

"So you have been to New York?" said Tom.

"Yes, I've been there, stranger. But it's no place for a fellow with only one farm. I allowed one fall when I sold my cattle that I had some money, but a trip to New York took some head, believe me. Will you take a bite with me, stranger? The old woman ain't much of a cook but she can fry potatoes to beat Sam Hill. No? Well, you are in a hurry to go East. All my hurry has been to come in the opposite direction."

"Yes," said Tom, "but it isn't Broadway. It's just the finest girl you ever saw. But say. Who does that grave over there belong to? And who was Melvin Adams?"

"Stranger," said the old farmer, "that is none of your damn business. If you are prying around here, then get! Hear?"

"Of course, I hear," said Tom, "but don't get angry. Let me explain."

And Tom told him about the time he had come

across the grave. And he told him about meeting Jane Armstrong and what a dandy girl she was and how he was going back to see her. And how he had hopes that the mines would make good and that some day he could bring her out into the West and have as comfy a looking place as the farmer had.

The old farmer gave him one look after he had finished and then he slowly filled his pipe, and throwing one leg over the upper rail of the fence, he swung himself on to it and turned in a way so as to look the stranger in the face.

"You look honest, stranger, and if you will give me your word only to tell the girl, I will tell you about Melvin Adams."

"Done!" said Tom, and pulling his pipe out of his pocket he filled it from his pouch and slowly packed the tobacco down before he tried to light it. He hardly dared to turn, for fear he might miss the story. And this is what the farmer told him:—

"It was in the days of '49 and a gang of us were making our way to the Goldfields. Melvin Adams was with us, and a right good fellow he was, full of hell all the time. He was always up to something. It didn't make no difference what happened. He must always have his joke. Straight as a pine tree and strong, he could do two men's work and at evening he was as full of fun as a kitten full of catnip.

"We had some hard times, I can tell you, and the grub was none too good, but Adams kept his spirits and many a good laugh we had at some of

his pranks. But one day we came to this place and drew our wagons up alongside of that brook over yonder, hardly daring to build our fires for the evening meal. We had been getting a little nervous all day, as we had seen plenty of Indian signs along the trail. Just before supper time, Adams stumped another fellow to ride a race over to the tree you see yonder. The challenge was taken and off they went. Adams won. Then to his surprise he saw a young Indian squaw sitting under the tree, and turning to his companion he said: 'See that squaw? She don't seem to know what to make of us. See me frighten the life out of her.' And pulling the six-shooter out of the holster, he took aim at a branch over the squaw's head. Just then his horse shied and the bullet hit the squaw and killed her. Adams did what he could, but it was no use. The squaw just gave him one look, and the red blood flowing out of a cruel wound in her breast took her life away.

"Adams returned and told us all about it. We made a circle of the wagons and posted sentries. All night long we kept seeing signal fires all about us, and in the morning we found we were all surrounded. As soon as it was broad daylight, two old Indians rode out from the trees carrying a white flag. Yocum, our leader, rode out to meet them and held a parley. When he came back, he said that all they wanted was the man who had shot that girl, and if we gave him up they would allow us to go on. At first we were for telling him that they would have to come and get him. But Adams spoke

up. 'No, boys, I won't have it. You will all be killed. It was all my fault and I will go.' Arguments were of no use. So we patched it up with those Indians so that they would not mutilate him, but would leave him for us to bury. We all shook hands with Adams before he rode out, and a little later we found him and buried him in that clump of trees and then we pushed on to California. When we reached there, some of us went in one direction and some in another, but we had all promised each other that in a year's time we would meet at a certain hotel in San Francisco. When the meeting came they got talking about what Adams had done for all of us, and later some of those who had prospered turned to me and said that they would buy me a thousand acres here, fit me out and give me so much cash, on condition that I would, as long as I lived, look out for the grave of Adams.

"But I forgot to tell you, stranger, that after Adams died, Yocum wrote a letter to his sister telling her that he was ill, and when we got near to California, he wrote another saying that he was dead. And he never signed either of the letters. So I came out here and took up farming. For a time, I looked after that grave because I was paid to, then I looked after it because I wanted to. But bless your heart! I would have to look after it anyway, for hardly six months pass without one of the old gang, or a son or daughter of one of them, turns up to see if I am doing my duty. And that was why, stranger, I was a bit touchy when

you asked me about it."

Years later Tom Langford's son rode up to the same place with a party of his chums. They were on their way to see some great mines. "I brought you here, fellows, to show you that well-kept grave," said Tom. "It is the grave of a great uncle of mine. He was a Forty-Niner."

INJUN PETE

THE camp fire had died down low enough so that we could get close to it. I was thinking of turning in. We had a hard day and the fish had not been biting very well. Both Allen McDougall and I were feeling rather blue. I had my eyes fastened on a live coal with its ever changing shadows which every now and then showed faint outlines of some face I knew, with a red glow all about it.

"Never did have any luck around that point!" said Allen.

"That's where Injun Pete had his camp years ago. Strange about that Injun. He and his pal built a 'lean-to' there first. They trapped a whole lot the first two or three winters and made good money. Then there came that terrible winter when there was so much snow that you could not do anything in the woods. Why it snowed so hard at times that you did not dare go to the rear of the camp to cut wood for fear you would not find your way back. Why, before winter was over Spencer Mountain looked like a hitching post on the way to Greenville. How Injun Pete and his pal lived through it I don't know. When the snow got to be six or eight feet deep I closed up my camp and snowshoed down to Greenville. I almost missed the town. If I hadn't walked right into Shaw's saw mill I guess I should have found myself in Bangor.

"Walker took me in at the Inn and I nearly froze for a month or two. I know I would have frozen if he had not given me a room right over the kitchen. It didn't take long mornings to get out of bed and down by the fire. Then you had to wait your turn until you could get a chance to warm up. When spring came I came near trying for a job on Capin's boat, things looked so wet I did not see how the woods were every going to dry out.

"But up comes a fellow from Boston and he wanted to go fishing. So I bought a good big canoe, laid in some supplies and off we started. The Lake was so high that we found it no use to fish. So we just paddled into Lilly Bay and made off for here. I knew where I had left a good steady canoe hidden under the snow well back in the woods. We fished the inlet first. My Lord, how they did bite! I nearly laughed my head off seeing that fellow from Boston pull them in. He gave up his flies after fifteen minutes and used his pole for a derrick. Several times when he hooked a big one I thought that he would go right into the water after him. When we had caught all we wanted, we paddled over by the point where we were fishing this afternoon. There we found Injun Pete and his pal working away for dear life building a good log cabin. I ran the bow of the canoe up on the beach and asked Pete what he was doing. 'Me goin' back up home to get squaw,' was all he grunted. That was all I could get out of him. So the fellow from Boston and I went along. Pete always was an unsociable cuss.

"Long in the fall of the year I passed that point again, and there, sure enough, Pete had the finest looking Injun girl for a wife you ever saw. For Injuns they were happy. Pete always put her up in the bow of his canoe, and many a time have I seen them paddling along the shores of Rotch Pond and could hear her singing one of those strange Injun songs.

"I guess they must have lived there a year or two. Then came a winter like the one I was telling you about. It was hard work even for old Wilson at the Outlet to keep alive and he could live through most anything. A trapper came out and told that Pete's wife was sick and that he was almost crazy. That's all I heard or knew about it until about three weeks later. John Gibson and I were running a line up near the Northeast Carry. There was just the finest crust on the snow you ever see. It was bitter cold and John and I were cursing ourselves for ever taking the job. We had built a fire in a hollow and were trying to get a little warm when who should pull in sight but Injun Pete and his pal. They came sliding along over the crust and dragging behind them the strangest sled load I had ever seen. It was a long bundle wrapped up in furs and tied round and round with deer sinews. I didn't like the shape much; it kind of gave me a shiver. When Pete saw us he started to run, saying something to his pal I could not understand. Then he recognized me and stopped. 'Got any tobac?' he says. 'Help yourself,' I said, and threw him a big plug of 'B and L.' 'Better stop

and have some grub,' I said. 'No time,' said Pete. 'My wife, she gone,' pointing to the sled. 'I take her back.' And off they went.

"And as I watched them glide away dragging the sled with its strange load, I turned to John and said: 'Greenville for me tomorrow. This line has run far enough.'

"And that is why I know there is never any luck around that point."

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